



OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Washington State
Conservation Commission
PO Box 47721
Olympia, WA 98504-7721
360/407-6200
Fax: 360/407-6215
www.scc.wa.gov

APPROVED MINUTES

The Farmland Preservation Task Force met on February 4, 2009 at the Natural Resource Conservation Service Office in Olympia, Washington. Chair Bob Hart called the meeting to order at 9:28 am.

MEMBERS ATTENDED

Chair Bob Hart
Don Munks, member
Richard Thomason, member
Dee Caputo, member
Jeff Harlow, NRCS (sitting in for Roylene Rides at the Door)
Fred Colvin, Member
Rudy Plager, Member
Lynn Bahrych, Member
Lee Faulconer, Member
Jeff Emtman, Member
Sheryl Cox, Member

COMMISSION STAFF

Mark Clark, Executive Director
Ron Shultz, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations Director
Josh Giuntoli, OFP Program Coordinator
Lori Gonzalez, Administrative Assistant

GUESTS

Kirsten Workman, Small Farms Coordinator
Russell Fox, South of the Sound Community Farmland Trust
Caitlin Krenn, South of the Sound Community Farmland Trust
Peter Witt, Public Citizen

ADMINISTRATIVE

Don Munks moved to approve the revised draft December 2008 Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Rudy Plager seconded. Motion passed.

RE-ELECTION OF CHAIR

Don Munks moved to re-elect Bob Hart as Chair of the Task Force and Sheryl Cox seconded the motion. Motion passed.

UPDATE ON FEDERAL FARM BILL

Ron Shultz discussed briefly that the Federal Farm Bill rules have just been released. There will be a public comment period through the end of March. We should have a better idea by the Task Force's May meeting on how those funds will be disbursed. Fred Colvin added that there is EQIP funds and there is roughly \$2 million coming to the state of Washington. Roylene Rides at the Door is working to understand the dynamic on how we can try to get more money for our state. Sheryl Cox asked how many types of programs in our state will be put on hold. It was stated that as of right now the Conservation Security Program is on hold for review.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Ron Shultz and Josh Giuntoli handed to the task force a list of bills that are currently of interest to farmland preservation and briefed the Task Force what they have actively been doing on the "Hill" in Olympia. Recently, the Commission did a presentation to the Senate Agriculture Committee on the budget for the WSCC as well as walked through OFPs report and recommendations. Ron explained the report was very well received by the committee members and how they were

impressed by the amount of work the Task Force members have achieved during the past year. Another presentation was given to the House Appropriations Committee on WSCC's budget. WSCC staff met with Representative Brian Blake, Chair of House and Natural Resources regarding the OFP report. Representative Blake expressed establishing a work session around the report, however, would need to be at a point where session has slowed down a bit.

The OFP report is currently at the print shop and should be done any day. Copies will be distributed around to State Agencies, as well as all members of the Legislature. A copy of the report has been posted to the OFP website: www.ofp.scc.wa.gov

Lynn Bahrych called attention to a specific bill currently in motion, HB 1613 - SB 5517- Establishing a meat and poultry inspection program- Members expressed this is something we should communicate or provide information to the legislative committees that this concept supports one or more of our recommendations for farmland preservation. Technically, state agencies cannot lobby, however, we can provide useful information to the committees.

Lynn Bahrych motioned for the Task Force to craft a letter that fits within the limits of what we can do, that indicates this bill supports and is consistent with the Task Force recommendations. Don Munks seconded. Motion passed.

Josh discussed stock water bills. House Ag had a hearing last week and testified on all three bills: HB1489, HB1091 and HB1509. HB1091 is the most restrictive bill due to the 5000 gallon a day limit, it would be retroactive once the bill goes to effect. Sheryl Cox expressed HB1091 will be extremely detrimental to all livestock. WSCC cannot lobby for these bills but are tracking them and have not taken any position on them as well as WSDA.

Sheryl Cox moved that the Task Force is against this bill and agrees that HB1091 is extremely detrimental to agriculture in the state of Washington. Commissioner Plager seconded. Discussion. Motion passes.*

***For the record, the following state agency members abstain and remain neutral on the subject: Lynn Bahrych from WSCC, Lee Faulconer from WSDA & Dee Caputo from CTED.**

Mark Clark explained to the Task Force that there will be additional bills the remainder of session that will raise concerns for the Task Force. Mark and staff will notify the Chairs of both the Commission and the Task Force to discuss. Mark will then take the concerns to the appropriate parties, for example; the policy folks at the weekly Natural Resources Sub Cabinet meetings, which involve all of the Natural Resource Agencies.

Josh stated February 25 will be the cutoff date for most of the bills. Ron shared the WSCC budget was cut 20% from carry forward level and has affected OFP by not being able to hire one more FTE but we will keep that position vacant due to the budget. There is a bill of concern right now which is the elimination of all boards and commissions through Representative Hunter, and another bill through Senator Pridemore, eliminate or *suspend* commissions and boards, and the WSCC was listed on there. Ron mentioned the next revenue forecast will be in March and is expected to reach seven billion.

SPECIAL AGRICULTURE LICENSE PLATE proposed by MIKE RUNDLE

There has been a proposal for a special agriculture license plate. Josh explained that currently, specialty plates have been suspended until July 2009. All the revenues generated from these plates first go into an account to pay for what has been done and once it has reached its threshold it then goes to what the language designated it for. In this case it would go towards OFP. Most members feel that this is a good idea and they support the idea as well as it being completely voluntary.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Josh reported Skagit and Snohomish had a joint Agriculture Advisory Board Committee Meeting. It is the first one that they had and have scheduled a joint meeting every six months. This is something that we should support them on; there are a lot of good things that could happen through these meetings.

PRESENTATION OF OFP REPORT

Lynn Bahrych reported on behalf of the Conservation Commission, that the Commission members approved the OFP report recommendations and were very pleased with the work the Task Force has done; to all come to a consensus of the recommendations presented. These are not bashful recommendations and could be somewhat controversial. If we want to preserve farmland this is where we need to start. The Commission members question how do we move forward to implement these recommendations and get a plan of action? And, how or what farmland do we preserve first?

Mark discussed the Commission members made a motion during their briefing that they would like to do an Inter-agency meeting to provide the report to all the various agencies and discuss what parts of these recommendations are going to impact them specifically and to answer any concerns they may have. This meeting is scheduled for March 18, prior to the Conservation Commission meeting being held on March 18 & 19 in Lacey, Washington.

FUTURE OF FARMING

Lee Faulconer briefed the Task Force on the Future of Farming. He stated that 400 online surveys were filled out by farmers. Lee Faulconer handed out the Executive Summary report that was done; the report reflects the responses and discussions from their focus groups that were done throughout the state. Future of Farming also has their set of recommendations. A lot of discussion on getting these reports out in the hands of the right people. Not only educate but advocate. The final report can be found on the WSDA website: www.agr.wa.gov

Sheryl Cox made commented on meshing future of farming recommendations with OFP's since they work hand in hand to preserving farmland.

MASON COUNTY SMALL FARMS PROGRAM

Kirsten Workman, Small Farms Extension Educator from Mason County Conservation District briefed the Task Force on her role at the conservation office and how she works with the local community in creating Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) programs. CSA programs are a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production.

The mission of the program: “Working with the Mason County Community to foster profitable family farms, land & water stewardship, and access to healthy food.”

SOUTH OF THE SOUND COMMUNITY FARM LAND TRUST

Presentation given by Russell Fox, Board Member

www.communitylandtrust.com

INDICATORS PRESENTATION

Ron Shultz wanted the Task Force to review the report that was presented to the legislature as this would help move into the indicators piece. Indicators are used to supply information about the state of systems, in this case the farmland preservation system. They identify key factors into measurable values, they are used for issue management and to develop or adjust policy actions. Commission staff provided suggested indicators for the Task Force to consider or come up with some collectively.

TASK FORCE NEXT STEPS

The Task Force formed sub groups organized around the following OFP topic areas: Transition, Regulatory (Permits Right to Farm, Farm Study, and Open Space), County Ag Strategic Planning (possible issues: grants, how to work with counties on ag strategic plans) and finally, State Management of Lands.

The subgroups will not physically meet; they would utilize email and conference calls to conduct the necessary business. They will meet on the recommendations and issues and come back to the task force with recommendations on how to proceed on that topic. The following Task Force members will meet on:

- **Transition-** Chair Hart, Fred Colvin, and Richard Thomason
- **Regulatory-** Don Munks, Rudy Plager, Greg Schoenbachler
- **County Ag Strategic Planning-** Fred Colvin, Jacob Anderson, Chair Hart, and Don Munks
- **State Management of Lands-** Sheryl Cox, Lynn Bahrych, and Jeff Emtman

Sheryl Cox raised the question on water. Agricultural water is extremely important and we need to do what we can to help inform other groups that do have a position in this area. Lynn Bahrych expressed that OFP does have recommendations that address water and the Commission has approved them along with the support of Future of Farming, we now have a stronger voice. After this legislative season there will be stakeholder meetings and there should be a Task Force representative at those meetings to voice our stand on water.

Chair Hart adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The Farmland Preservation Task Force will have a farm tour and interaction dinner on May 5 & 6 in Ellensburg, Washington.